coffeeshop crushes

Tales of Love and Lust in Coffee Establishments

Coffeeshop Crushes: Tales of Love and Lust in Coffee Establishments

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The first boy i ever fell in love with was a barista. He introduced me to froofy soy drinks, touching my heart with anarchy signs drawn in chocolate while at the same time making me edgey and even more aware than usual of how my crush was not reciprocated. That's right, to this twenty one year old boy in converse one stars i was just a friend. another girl sitting at the bar, patiently waiting, while he mopped at night and flirted with customers, for my chance to chatter with him and let him know that our love was meant to be. So begins the story of my life, coffee crush after coffee crush, an affinity with near-sighted men, and hundreds of dollars worth of earnings shoved into tip jars in hopes of winning affections. I've alienated almost every boyfriend i've ever had by making him feel inadequate next to the espresso slinger. I've never dated any of the loves i've bought coffee from, but when forced behind the counter myself, i took advantage of my position and lured love interests in with coffee cards and promises of free cinnamon rolls. Sadly my role as barista was short lived and now i'm back where i started, stumbling over my words when the time comes to order a drink, and making mental lists of my favorite servers and their charming characteristics. Hence, the ever appropriate coffeeshop crush zine. For all the customers whose advances i've scoffed at.

"Nicole"

It wasn't bitterness, really—just nostalgia. Okay, it was nostalgic bitterness. One day "Brady" and I were sitting around, considering our respective histories of crushes borne in coffee establishments. Later, the subject came up among friends, and some of them had stories of crushes involving café workers, too. Perhaps as a desire to find our fellow sufferers, in order to bond over injuries sustained, we thought of starting a zine. Café Girl was our original title. We even had a poster. I think we put one up, somewhere—in a café no doubt.
Alas, Café Girl never got off the ground. We didn't even write down our own stories of woe. However, about a year later, I mentioned the idea to my friend "Nicole". No doubt it was in Stumptown café. She loved the idea. What's more, some eavesdropping, coffee-adled patrons near our table liked it. This (and the coffee) was just the energy we needed to make the newly retitled Coffeeshop Crushes take off! And now, several months later, the results rest snuggly in your hands. Big thanks to all who shared their sordid tales with us. This will probably be a one-time zine, but maybe we should consider crushes in other venues? Nah, that is just too much misery.

"Jon"

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nicole@scribble.com

Life-like illustrations by Clutch McBastard

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN

By Shannon Wheeler

HEH HEH HEH
YOU KNOW, I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO MEET MY FRIENDS HERE.
THAT'S WHY I ORDERED THIS BIG PIZZA.
BUT THEY DIDN'T SHOW UP!
I'M IN A COFFEE SHOP AND I HAVE A PIZZA!
I FEEL LIKE AN IDIOT.
I'M NOT EVEN HUNGRY.
CAN I SIT WITH YOU?

©2000 SHANNON WHEELER

Queen of the Dweebuses

I know i have a million stories in here already, but i'd like to add one tidbit that didn't even start with a crush, but got more and more embarrassing as it unfolded and may as well have. I started the day at the coffeeshop and realized when i returned home that i'd left my very important pencil bag there (some six miles away). I drove back with pet dog in tow, retrieved my pencil bag and returned only to find my keys locked in the car (possibly a getaway plan thwarted when my pet dog realized she could not drive a stick shift). I requested help from the coffeeshop and "Joe" was quick to respond, jogging to the car and ever so quickly retrieving said keys. I thanked him and after putting my backpack in the car, promptly locked them in again. Realizing there was no other choice, i swallowed my pride and had to ask "Joe" for help AGAIN.

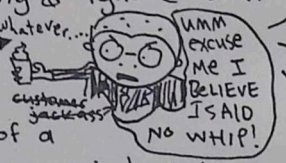
Wow, embarrassing, right? Gets better. I get home overwhelmed with faith in the goodness of man kind and decide that this good deed will not go unnoticed. I make Joe a thank you card, send it to the coffeeshop, and call up the Back Fence section of the Oregonian to announce what a fine person this gentleman is. (back fence being the community section where old people thank nameless strangers for pushing their cars out of the road, etc etc). A week goes by and each time at the coffeeshop someone mentions the letter i'd sent. I thought they were mentioning it or poking fun so i didn't take much notice until finally someone said "Who IS that for?" I pointed at Joe. "him..." "Who— Dan???" "oh, your name's not Joe... it's Dan... i must have remembered it wrong...ha.... errr...." Wow, what an embarrassing story. NO, IT'S NOT OVER YET. After two weeks my embarrassment had faded. One morning as i settled in at work with a cup of coffee , i looked in the paper and realized they had printed my fucking back fence announcement to JOE not DAN, meaning all of this was again brought up to crown me as Queen of the Dweebuses.

b..but i love you!
i get car privileges in 2 weeks... do you want to go for a ride in my car..
i have a boy friend
i didn't ask your boyfriend

my first coffeeshop crush from the other side of the counter...

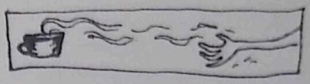
by n.g.

i got a job at a coffeeshop after crushing on baristas for years, & started drawing all of our signs & advertisements. Within 2 months of starting, i fell in love (well...fell in like..ack hem). He came in every day, ordered respectable drinks, & drew for HOURS (which seems positive, but nearly gave me daily heart attacks... so nervous & jumpy around him!). I would forget syrup in his drink or get wrapped up in talking & ignore other customers or get their drinks wrong. It came to a peak after 2 weeks of consistent conversations about drawing. He took an hour and drew me a picture of a coffeeshop girl in place of one of his own comic books! (Now that's devotion...) He squirreled away afterwards and guess what → never came in on my shift again.

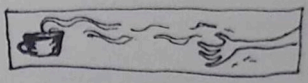


... i guess he moved across town... Let's assume it's because he was too lovesick to be near me.. yea...

How Rachel's mom and dad met —
She had a crush on my dad, so she'd do things like empty her parents milk so she could go there. And then one day she talked to him. he asked her out because he liked the way she walked up the stairs.
It was a coffee shop?
No.
It was Stumptown located on 34th and Belmont?
...yes.

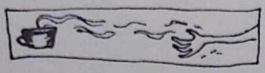


When I was 14, this boy I liked worked at a place called U Wash Puppy, where you pay them ten dollars to wash your own dog, and I would do things like put peanut butter in my mom's shih-tzu's hair so I could take it there all the time. and it was a coffee shop.
Sometimes I have to stop wearing clothes because I'll wear it and some guy will be like, "that's my favorite dress on you. out of all your dresses." and then I'll go home and burn it, and never wear it again. (Nicole)

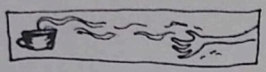


I have a naughty story. I guess I'll tell this story first because it's kind of about a crush. There was this guy, I worked at a coffee shop and I got the job by wearing a wig because I didn't have any hair and I figured it was in Latte Land and I was wearing this femme fatale black bob wig and the owners were like "wow, you're so cute, cool" I figured about the sixth time I went in I'd try not wearing it.
Did they fire you on the spot?
No, they told me to put it back on next time I came in, so I'd wear turbans most of the time.
But anyway, there was this guy, a red headed old man named Lee. He had curly red hair and lots of freckles and very bad breath and he would talk to me for hours on end and he was very sweet. he was kind of those nice sort of fellas. and he gave me a Joe frank page that was really amazing and that's all I remember, but this is not about love at all. this is a story, maybe it's love, I don't know.. This woman was waiting outside about 6:30 in the morning, pounding on the window "Let me in! Let me in!" She had a big coffee pot. We let her in and she was like "I need this whole coffee pot filled with coffee right now!" and so we did it and then the manager was giving her her change back and shorted her like, two cents... "where's my two cents? where is it? you shorted me!" and he said "hold on , I'll get it." He reaches into the cash register and gets her two cents and he hands it back and he says "this is for the beach house". (giggles) I love that story.
Nicole you probably remember Jerry. You'd always see him at the plaza. He had a real nice Chiefs jacket and real nice brand new shoes and he actually lived with his mom but he was posing as a homeless man. He made like more than I did in a single day. He made like at least a hundred and fifty dollars in a single day . It was pretty good. But um he and I were buddies and we'd always chat and he had a crush on me so he's always come into latte land to say hi and he was so abrasive the owners hated him, but I'd always sneak him little gifts. One day he came in and he said "y'ever wake up drunk?" (giggles) And he turned around and he said "lemme show you my Christmas tree" and he pulled up his sleeve and it was a big marijuana tattoo.

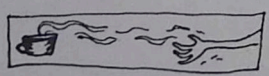
My friend lived in a house full of bike messengers and you could barely go up the stairs because there was like two feet of crap all the way, they'd just throw their garbage there. Some guy had a human hand on a plate in his bedroom and it was really stinky and they were like "what're you going to do with that?" and he was like "I don't know, dip it in bleach and stuff"
How'd he get it?
He said his friend "hooked him up with it." That's funny.
In the same place the cousin of one of the people who lived there moved in. She was like 16 or something, she'd run away from home. And she had this room and they found out that she'd slept with everybody in the whole house like the first week that she'd been there and she would bring home weird guys every night. She'd be making a whole buncha noise and no one ever went into her room because it creeped them out how many guys were there. She turned up missing and she was gone for like weeks and weeks so they went into her room and hanging in the closet was a pair of leather lederhosen. The long kind, only one leg had been sewn like really close to the body. Like it was this one legged German, it was this leather leiderhosen that was all stained and there were like whips everywhere and all kinds of weird toys... (Kalah)



There was this girl, she came in here a few times. She was kind of cute, whatever, I wasn't super into her, but you know, ... and -um- she really liked me and I thought it was funny and then one day it was towards the end of my shift and there was no one in here really and I went into the supply closet to get milk and I was all standing there and I heard the door close and she was all standing there and it was all "uh oh" and she just looked at me and we kissed. That's all. And then we made out and I got all paranoid that there were customers but we made out for like five minutes. And then she left town or something because I never saw her more than twice after that. (Melissa)

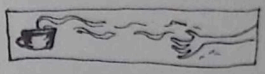


This guy who I could tell had a crush on me (and somehow knew my name) used to come into the coffeeshop a lot. I sort of liked him, but, No Way. I came home one Saturday night to a drunk message he had left on my answering machine (I, of course, hadn't given him my number): "I don't want to scare you... I don't know if you know who this is, it's Jon from the coffeeshop..." It was really rambly and creepy and he kept saying he didn't mean to scare me (which, of course, scared me). I felt guilty that I had encouraged this kind of thing, then I was mad that he had gotten my number and called me. He came into the coffeeshop on Monday acting like nothing was wrong and I was a jerk to him. I called him later and told him that it made me uncomfortable and that it wasn't cool to do. He doesn't come in any more.
There was a guy who used to come in and was friends with Keith. I thought he was just a good looking, gay sort of cop guy (mustache, etc). He came in one day and I was totally over the top, fag hag friendly to him. The next day , Keith came n and said, "my friend M likes you a LOT". So, basically he had thought I was interested in him. The end. (Robin)

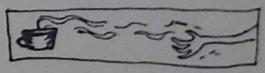


I had just moved here and had not many friends, so I would go to this coffee place all the time and developed a crush on the mean coffee guy there. He listened to Tortoise and Gastro del Sol, so I thought we had something in common. I tried to talk to him once. I approached the counter one day and tried to make myself seem knowledgable by saying, "Is this the David Grubbs solo record or Gastro Del Sol?" He just kind of shrugged her off, "...I don't know." It had already been a hard day, so I was crying on the inside. (Jessica)

Okay. This is my story of barista to barista sweet lovin. So I dated this boy for 4 and a half years in high school and it was pretty cool until I started working at Barnes and noble. In fact you know, in the betrayal side of things, he's the one who actually taught me how to make espresso drinks and whatnot. so then I take my fledgling skills to Barnes and noble where I meet this beautiful girl whose name I can't think of off the top of my head but I know I have it written down in my journal somewhere and immediately dump my boyfriend because I have this huge crush on this girl and I write her love notes and I put them in the pockets of her jacket at work and all this stuff and we hang out in the parking lot by my car and like kick the ground and not really look at each other. its' really great and I dreamed about making out with her and stuff. I finally got up the courage to ask her on a date and being the amazing planner that I am, I thought, y'know, dinner and a movie –"the classic"– chicks they love it. I took her out for a turkey sandwich at the colophon cafe and then took her to the movie but wasn't thinking ahead when I planned to see the double feature of comic book confidential and CRUMB, the documentary on that loveable knee-jerk misogynistic misanthrope Robert crumb and y'know, didn't really realize that just because I was interested in it would mean I was interested in it. and as anyone who's seen crumb would know, you kind of have to be into him to see that movie and be okay with it and everything. so she never went out with me again after I took her to see that movie. Thanks Robert Crumb. (Florence)



So my friend Crawford had a crush on this girl that worked at the 7-11 and we'd go down there to look at her and we'd walk past the window and look at the 7'11 girl and I found out that she worked at this donut/coffee shop so I'd go in there all the time and stare at her and then somehow I got invited over to her house and it was really cool and I was all stoked and like "I'm totally gonna make out with this chick" and I even asked her for a job application and stuff as a dumb excuse to talk to her and then we go to her house and she totally blows me off and doesn't even care, but her roommate's really cute. So I made out with her roommate for a long time and we talked about art and all this stuff and we got along great and I was really excited because she was super cool, and then I called her the next day and she never returned my phone calls. She didn't want anything to do with me. So we stalked this fuckin 7-11 donut girl for a long time and finally I get my chance and I blew it. Alright. One time there was this cute girl who worked at the Coffee Merchant, this coffee shop in San Luis and like, she was really cute and um Eliot and I were walking down town and we were really drunk and saying hi to all the ladies, tellin them they looked good and to keep it up, and the girl was walking past with this other girl and we talked to them and said "hey do you guys want to go and get a drink with us?" and they were only18 and we felt so dirty. They were like "we're not old enough." "Oh, okay" and I'd go in there and stare at her and eat ice cream in front of her and drink iced coffee and pay too much for coffee just so I could look at her.
I'd like to think that people do that for me. (Julie)



Okay, my coffeehouse crush story by Ray. This was about 8 years ago when I lives in Saint Paul and I was working at my second coffeehouse job, a place called A Fine Grind. This was in Minnesota. And there was this girl Mary who used to come in quite frequently and one day I remember she paid with a check and I asked to see her I.D. and she said something about how it sucked that you had to show id if you wanted to pay with a check and I said something really stupid like "well if it were up to me I wouldn't need to see an I.D. from someone as lovely as yourself." Something really cheesy like that. And she kind of got flustered and I flirted with her for a minute (because I had had a crush on her for a while). As I was closing that night she drove up and she was like "when do you get off?" and I just said "I'm almost done" and so we drove to my house. She had a bunch of whiskey. We just drank whiskey for about a half hours and then started going at it on the living room floor and I don't remember much but I remember my roommate at the time, Jenny, walking in on us. And I remember being really fucking embarrassed and going upstairs and she came in a lot after that but never talked to me again. She was mad at me or something. Anyway, that's my coffeehouse crush story for today. Bye.

1. THE START!
Aah, morning!
It's my most fav'rite time of day! Y'wanna know why?
COFFEE! Nectar o' the gods!
In fact, I'm on my way down to the best java joint in town to down a couple!
And if I'm lucky, I might see *** working there today!
2. AT THE COFFEE HOUSE
Coffee oh boy
Gosh! She is working today! And she looks as beautiful as ever!
TIPS

Geez, I really like her, but I never talk to her about anything other than the coffee I'm ordering!
But what would I say? I know nothing about her! And I'm never good at this small talk stuff!
URGH! If I try to say anything, it'll look all awkward, like I was trying to pick her up!
And there's probably dozens of guys who come in here daily and hit on her! I'd look like one of them!
Hey baby! Want to party tonite?
If there was only some way to initiate a conversation with her without looking like a lovestruck fool! If only I had a way...
HEY! Nice Chucks!
Hunh?! Wha?!
3 THE CHUCKS!
I said, Nice Chuck Taylors you're sporting there!
Oh yeah, thanks!
Omigod! She's really talking to me
They must be hard to find these days! I don't see them around as much!
Yeah, it took me a bit to find this pair, but it was well worth it!
C'MON! Think of something witty to say!
Well, here's your coffee! Have a good day!
Smooth move there, Mr. Quarkin! You had a perfect opportunity there and what d... you do? You b... it, of course... way to go! ... maybe next t...
grumble mope
DOES IT EVER END

shawngrantontfrindustriesseptohone

The Curse of the Coffee Boys by Lizz Zitron

The allure of a coffee boy lies in his boyishness. The Zachs of the world have skinny bodies, devoid of hair or muscles. It is their pubescence and underdeveloped bodies, and minds, and hearts, which draw women in their twenties to these elusive creatures. Sex with a coffee boy is either mind-numbing or explosive, but either way you are guaranteed bruises on your inner thighs from their prominent pelvic bones.

There is something soothing and comforting about pressing up against a puerile body in bed while you struggle to find your place in the adult world. Coffee boys are interested in collecting comic books and playing video games. They cannot "talk about their feelings." Having children with a coffee boy never enters the picture; with them, you already have one.
Interestingly, coffee boys often resemble that boy on the playground who never paid attention to you.

I think I am finally getting it right. After Jeff, I dated a series of manly men. They were big, hairy and overbearing. They took me out on nice dates and could afford jewelry. But they could not tap into my green imagination or appreciate an hour spent blowing bubbles. They took me to the opera, then wondered why I cried over "a silly musical."
I met Dan a month ago. My best friend convinced me to meet him. "He dresses like the boys you dated in high school, but he's grown up." Dan works a real job, but is not so tied to it that he wouldn't consider picking up and moving to Africa with me. Dan gets excited over new basketball shoes, and he asked what he should do when I cry. Dan calls me at 2:30 in the morning to play guitar for me.

After knowing me three weeks, Dan wrote a song for me. I went back to my old coffee haunt a few weeks ago. Zach is still there, making mochas behind the counter.

Lizz Zitron is an Ironminds associate editor and the lucky recipient of David Klepper's AM Gold collection.From http://www.ironminds.com/

James Squeaky — james@misterridiculous.com

I've really had to cut back on the pot of coffee plus a day I was consuming not too long ago. I still drink quite a lot and as much as I love coffee, it should come to no surprise that I would be prone to crushes on the wonderful, magical feminine barristas who fill my life with such intense, oily, bitter joy. The ladies who ask "room for cream?" and who have sometimes been known to punch out more than one space on my frequent buyer card... bringing me that much closer to my well-deserved "free cup".

I have to be perfectly honest and say that even the thought of someone serving me coffee turns me on. My confession is that the discovery that a girl I meet works in a coffee shop has been known to pique my interest.

I currently have a crush on two different girls at the coffee shop I live a block away from. Both are girls that I would probably develop minor crushes on regardless; the fact that they help me make the transition from shaking with the pain and headache of not having had my first cup of the day to shaking with shear ecstatic joy might be what puts these ideas in my head. These girls also keep me from just making my own damn coffee at home.

One of the girls is so striking; long black hair kept in a pony tail while she works, very tall (like 6'2") and always dressed intimidatingly well. She's not all that hip, but dresses more like my stepmother would when she was going out on a fancy occasion with my dad: Black silk skirts with flower prints on them, very tall cowboy boots, well color-coordinated and tasteful tops. Simple tattoos. She's just so beautiful that pretty much anyone would go nuts over her.

Now, I don't particularly pine for this girl. She's not really the type of girl I normally even get a crush on. I don't think about her when I'm not at or on my way to get coffee. Despite this, while I'm inside the coffee shop, I am struck totally dumb. I sorta mutter, try to make conversation, never get too far and run away as quickly as possible. My weekend routine is to wake up around noon and immediately stumble down to the coffee shop... dehydrated, decaffeinated, not having eaten anything, and in no condition to be communicating with any human being, let alone, someone that I am intimidated by. Normally, somewhat charismatic and set out to make any retail worker I encounter have a better day, I am in bad form. My eyes diverted to the ground, terribly self-conscious and just wanting to get in and out.

She has always seemed so graceful and elegant until last Saturday. As she was ringing me up, the paper in her cash register got jammed. I thought it was kind of weird that they even have register tape since who gets receipts for coffee? But then, I guess it's for internal records more than anything. When she opened the top to fix the tape, it popped out and flew everywhere. She scrambled for it with her hands and ended up knocking over a little tray of business cards, which she then started grabbing for. As she gathered up the tape and picked up the tray and cards, her face went so beet red that I felt really kind of embarrassed to even be a witness to her fumbling. Not like it was a big deal to me, but she seemed to have a hard time dealing with her lack of grace.

I smiled and helped her finish picking up the cards. As I walked home, I actually felt good to have seen this human side of her. I realized that I had totally idealized her as this statuesque beauty-queen, when in fact she's just another shit-worker like you or me. Since then, she's always been super friendly to me and asks me about how I'm doing. She even sees me coming from the window and gets the coffee all ready for me, without me even having to order.

And, since I have the floor for a second... One thing that I would like to make clear is that I have a real problem with the whole idea of asking people on dates while they are working. It's so incredibly awkward when you are in a position of being paid to be friendly and helpful to customers and they interpret that as genuine interest in their personal affairs. I respect that when a waitress/waiter serves me food and is friendly to me that her/his first priority is to secure a tip from me. I don't wish to make her/his job any more difficult or uncomfortable than it has to be and in return I expect her/him to be courteous and make sure that I am well-served. Nothing bothers me like when I witness a male attempting to monopolize the attentions of a waitress because he is attracted to her and knows that she'll be polite and tolerate his attention. I just don't think that people should be put in the position of having to feel personally uncomfortable and unsafe in their work place. I'll at least be one guy who won't be assuming that a server's friendliness isn't an invitation to assume that they are interested in me. OK?

Coffeehouse Daydreams by Clutch

CREAM?
SUGAR?
But I never even talked to her.
refill?
m-hum
Kiss Me!
SIR?
I don't even like coffee.
And the truth is...
8/01

An Anonymous Tale of Caffeine and Obsession

I sincerely hope that one day, someone will write a thesis on the volatile effect which the ratio of number of cafés per capita (or square km) has upon various and silly social situations. This matters to me because I grew up in a midwestern college town with a population roughly a tenth of Portland's, all wedged within a much smaller space with an exponentially smaller downtown "hangout" arena. Anyone who's ever shot a can of silly string with a bb gun will attest to the magical properties of high pressure, so take those strutting, indie-rock beauties on Hawthorne and those weird coincidences where you find out your housemate's ex once bought a Vespa from your best friend's new significant other and pack it all even tighter, make it a little dumber, and keep a steady flow of the contents, refreshing once about every four years. Distribute that shaken pop-can-of-hormones among four or five cafés, and you'll know what I'm talking about.

I'll admit that my story is as much a romantic version of walking into a glass door while blinded by the shiny objects just beyond that invisable barrier that just broke your nose as the next story in here, but I'm also willing to begrudge a little thanks to the insane small town pressure of my old stomping grounds, without which time would have run out before I had any chance to bruise my little heart.

So there was this girl who worked at one of the better cafés in this town.

I was a boy who worked at one of the better (ok, the best) bookstores. About two and a half years ago some radiant creature, obviously a fugitive from the imagination of Astrid Lindgren, walked right into my bookstore and blinded me at a young age with her halo of grace and little cartoon blue birds. We had a cut out of Seven-of-nine in the science fiction section wearing one of our T-shirts, stapled to which was a picture of me, looking extra loungey, with my arm around the cardboard fanboy fantasy, captioned "Ask about our $5 Polaroid special." (A better example of the owner's son's sense of humor and willingness to try just about anything you could not ask for.) No one asked. Until SHE came in. M, as we will call her, said it would be perfect for her photo project... for SCHOOL. AAAAA! The SCH-word! This meant death to my throbby little heart because a) if she were old enough, which seemed highly unlikely from her nubile phsyique (yes, I did just say "nubile physique") she couldn't have been immune to Newton's Second Law of Dating (Concerning Students—do not date them) but most likely b) she was talking about High School. Visions of uncomfortable dinners with Mom and Vietnam Vet Dad, idiotic school friends, and Shakespearean-level drama began clouding the haze of goodness radiating from M. Then there was that fun chance of jail. In the end, I took her picture as she draped over 7-of-9 and held our stuffed leather pig/footstool (Stitchy) and rationalized the price down to $2.50 and watched her walk right out the door as selected vital organs hemorraghed.

I didn't see her again for about a year, during which I somehow managed to survive six months in New Orleans, where her memory returned constantly and at odd moments.

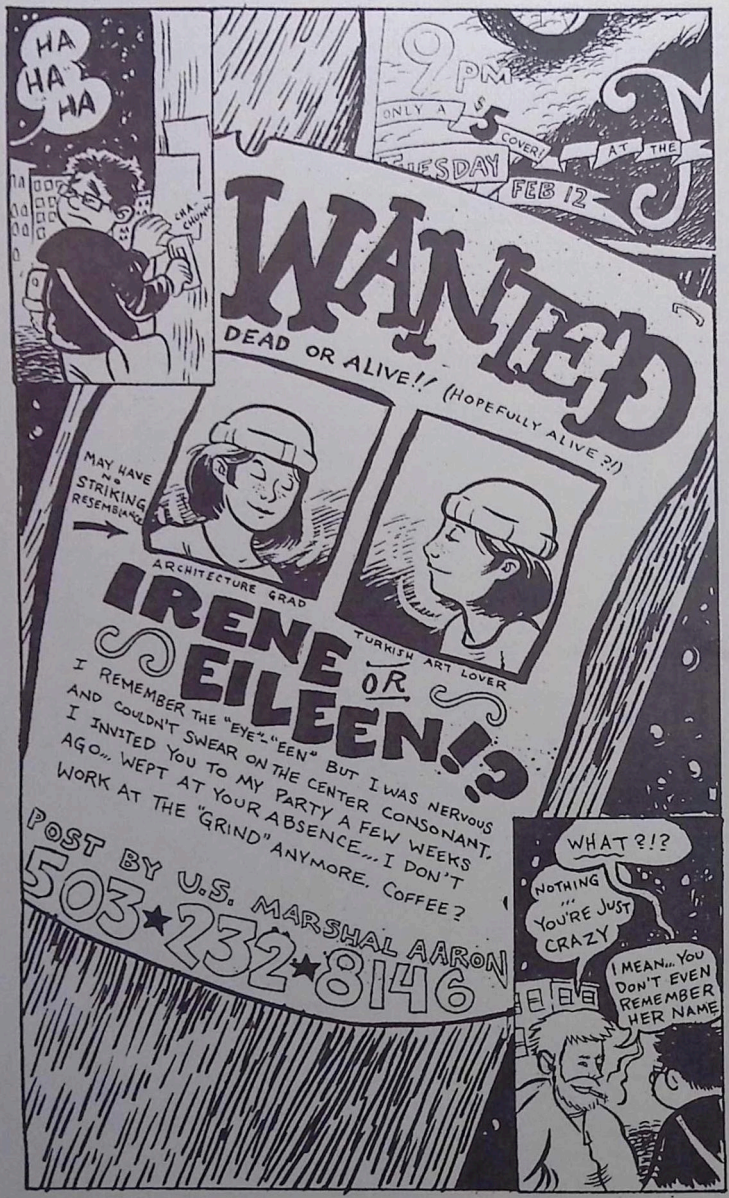
I summered in my hometown and returned to work at the bookstore. A week before my birthday she applied for a job. She wasn't 16. She was 20. She was even better than I remembered her. (For those of you at home: you can simulate the experience of M walking in the room by filling a kiddie pool with strawberry pulp and champagne—the good stuff, don't skimp here—heating it to just above body temperature, getting a slight fever or touch of botchulism, and falling asleep naked in it.) I was at the time in that strange no-mans-land of a relationship when it's not quite there anymore but it's not quite over either (but it's all difficult). I almost chewed my arm off.

This disturbing thing happens in my hometown. It's called Art Fair, and it means half a million tourists and their crippled senses of ettiqute bump paunches among hundreds of tents on the streets filled with chintzy knick-knackery. Luckily I had 12 hour days and thousands of (pounds of) books to fill my time during Art Fair while trying to convince the owner's son to hire M. Wasn't happening. During this week of insanity and monsoons, my girlfriend left town after agreeing to put our relationship on hold for a while. I'll leave my graceless coordination of M and her out of this, but let me say this: it was graceless, utterly. About three hours after her plane took off, what was left of my consciousness told me that it was time to dig my way out of the book tent and go to lunch. "I'll find M," I told myself, probably due to heat stroke. Amid the hordes, somehow I did. Within a block.

On her bike and in stripes, she glowed like toaster oven coils among the charred detritus of Art Fair. Awestruck and probably just plain dumb with fear I watched her as she turned the corner, heading north and away from the mele. As I turned the corner to just see her bike away, a blaze of sunlight broke through the clouds, filled the clearing in the crowd we had entered, and the enormous sound stage she passes suddenly blares Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" as she bikes into the sunset.

I was hooked.
Day after Art Fair, when the city droops in a post-climactic ache, I dragged myself out of bed at 1 and stumbled to my favorite café for some coffee. They were closed. No note, no sign, no reason. Just closed. As soon as I got there I realized I was about to see M. I could have gone to the other café down the street, but instead I went to their other location across town.
"Hey, aren't you the guy from the bookstore?"
Oh. My. God.
After calming my nerves with some coffee, I was suave enough to interrupt a conversation she was having with her manager to ask her out to dinner. She grinned, looked right in my eyes and just said "Yes."
We went out to dinner. The date lasted six hours. It was beautiful.
By the end of the summer, various elements of the cosmos (including my other volatile relationship, her current mistrust of all things male, and my habit of tripping over my own feet whenever I saw her) had drawn us apart, but of course didn't prevent the auckward chance meeting or two.
I had about two days to go before packing everything I owned into my car and heading to Portland, and for the preceeding three weeks thought about M almost nonstop. Walking down one of the main streets of that town I ran into my two friends Andrew from high school (Andrew and his friend Andrew). I was still waving over my shoulder when M biked past me. I uttered something stupid. She kept going. I was about to run after her when my ex-girlfriend called my name from the other side of the street (which I hadn't yet managed to cross). I tried to talk to her, but had to apologize for running off. And I ran off. Didn't catch her. I went back to work and wrote her a long and very clear email.
I didn't hear from her until December 12th.
She had one of the most vivid dreams of her life, and the last thing she saw before waking up was my face.
We emailed daily for months. I sent her a dozen pink roses and her own domain name for Valentines Day. My opinion of Portland girls was shot. She was going to come out for spring break. And then she wasn't. And then she was. And then she told me to never contact her again and called me a bunch of rather painful things. After three weeks, on the day I found out my grandfather died, she apologized. She had been talking to an old flame of mine, who must have had her information mixed up. (Uh-huh) She sent me the roses back and a tiny rubber lizard to apologize. Resume daily emailing.
We called. We sent packages. Mix tapes. Little kitty cat candle holders. She was going to come out here again. Then she wasn't. Then she was. Then she wasn't. Then I decided for her and bought her a ticket. She began calling me almost every day. Romance wasn't a definite. Nothing was definite, except that the sun and birds and all the Stumptown Coffee in the universe still couldn't compare to the high thinking about her gave me. About 15 hours before her plane was supposed to arrive she called me. There had been a tragedy (an understandable one) and she wasn't coming. Turbulence. Pain. Sadness. Drinking.
She has to earn some money this summer and work out what she's doing in the future. She has an airline voucher that will work come Autumn. She'll be here for Halloween.

BONUS STORY TO ONLY BE PRINTED IF "ANONYMOUS" IS SINGLE AT THE TIME OF PUBLICATION
The cutest girl who serves the strongest coffee does so just around the corner from my house. She used to play her sad and jangly and beatiful songs there before they hired her. Once she played my favorite Magnetic Fields song, and when I cheered for that she said "Oh, now you cheer." She's sweet and wholesome and apparently doesn't know that coffee girls are supposed to be rude and snippy and crush your heart every chance you give them. I run into her when I'm biking sometimes (not like that—we cross paths, dummy) and once my friends and I handed her a donut from my truck while we were driving and she was biking. Sometimes she winks so adorably I swear she's practiced it in the mirror. She might have realized that I think she's fabulous by now, but I'm sure someone as sweet as she has a full retinue of boyfriends. My other excuse for not mentioning anything is that it'd be a crime against nature to draw her into the vortex of debauched revelry that has been my summer. But then she read this, fell madly in love with me, and I bought her some really good chocolate cake.


HA HA HA
CHA-CHUNK
9PM
ONLY A $5 COVER!
AT THE
TUESDAY FEB 12
WANTED
DEAD OR ALIVE!! (HOPEFULLY ALIVE?!)
MAY HAVE NO STRIKING RESEMBLANCE
ARCHITECTURE GRAD
TURKISH ART LOVER
IRENE OR EILEEN!?
I REMEMBER THE "EYE"-"EEN" BUT I WAS NERVOUS AND COULDN'T SWEAR ON THE CENTER CONSONANT. I INVITED YOU TO MY PARTY A FEW WEEKS AGO... WEPT AT YOUR ABSENCE... I DON'T WORK AT THE "GRIND" ANYMORE. COFFEE?
POST BY U.S. MARSHAL AARON
503★232★8146
WHAT?!?
NOTHING ... YOU'RE JUST CRAZY
I MEAN... YOU DON'T EVEN REMEMBER HER NAME

DUDE
I THOUGHT THIS WAS A COFFEE SHOP, MAN
COFFEE'S IN THE NEXT ROOM
HEY...
WHATCHA DRAWIN'?
WOW... IT LOOKS JUST LIKE HIM
OH... IT'S SUPPOSE TO BE HER...
OH... heh
I WAS NERVOUS OKAY? SHE WAS TOO PERFECT. SO CUTE SHE WAS STUNNING... SHE WAS INTO ARCHITECTURE... AND INVITED ME TO THIS TURKISH ART SHOW
BUT YOU HAD TO WORK LATE?
YEAH
"WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
"EYE-
BUT TWO DAYS LATER SHE CAME IN TO TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT
IT SUCKED
heh
THE LAST DAY I WORKED AT THE "DAILY GRIND" I INVITED HER TO MY PARTY "" SEEMED EXCITED
I'LL SEE YOU THERE

BUT SHE NEVER CAME
MAYBE YOU CREEPED HER OUT... JUST LIKE THIS FLYER PROBABLY WILL
CHA
SHUNK
MAYBE THAT'S WHAT I WANT! SOMEONE THAT'LL LOVE ME DESPITE THE FACT I'M SEVERLY MISGUIDED! MAYBE EVEN FINDS IT ENDEARING!
SO... YOU WANT ME TO HELP TEAR DOWN THE FLYERS TONIGHT? OR EARLY IN THE MORNING AFTER YOU'VE HAD TIME TO THINK?
... I REALLY FELT SHE WAS THE ONE
Sigh
(I LEFT UP MOST OF THE FLYERS... SHE NEVER CALLED)
TREMIER

From Our San Francisco Office

In the neighborhood around my studio there's only one place to get good coffee in a 6-block radius, unless you count, which I don't, the Starbuck's which used to be the "Stealth Starbuck's", Circadia, but is now just a Starbuck's. During the Internet boom there was one other place, but they now are only open for dinner. So, Atlas Cafe is the the only place.

I go there at least once a day to get caf?nated and take a break from my little multi-media cave existence. At Atlas the counter is almost always staffed by one of several cute girls, and I have a crush on each one of them. I'm not sure why there's always a cute girl taking orders, and Mexican guys doing the cooking. Maybe it's because they know English better, or maybe people tip more when it's a cute girl. Which begs the question, does the cute girl get all the tips, or does she share with the harder-working Mexicans, who probably get paid less than her anyway? I don't know.

Anyway, every one of the girls is very cute and I ?nd them attractive in various ways. Most of them are spunky, punky, skater girls, some with dreadlocks and tight t-shirts with the names of hardcore bands emblazoned across their chests. I try to be chatty sometimes but usually that comes off as sounding nerdy and clueless. I ask about the music they're playing on the stereo, or about their t-shirt ("yeah, 'Distopia' is a band." "...oh. I see...")

Once, I saw one of them, the little blonde dreadlocked girl, skateboarding to work and my heart melted. It was so cool and cute that she was commuting that way. She has rosy cheeks and a cute little button nose. I have crushes on all these girls, every day, up until the time that I order and pay and then wait 10 minutes for my latte.

There's sort of a general slacker ethic that permeates the Atlas. Maybe it's not the workers' faults, though. Maybe the owner tells them to be lazy and slow. Maybe he says, "Yeah, when there's a big line, just continue your personal phone call for as long as you want. And when you're making an espresso drink, try to stop in the middle and get distracted, maybe argue with the cooks about something, or gossip with another customer about their boyfriend. Whatever you do, don't promptly make any espresso drink!"

Yes, it might just be an employee requirement, but still, I ?nd it to be sort of a turn off. So as I sit down with my late latte and a book about feminist ?lm theory, I quickly forget all about the currently on-duty, slacker-barrista-hottie — until the next time I'm in line...

–S.

A Guy came into the coffee shop I work at and told my friend and i "a friend of mine gets coffee here and she doesn't even drink coffee, she likes some guy who works here."

Great sex and (sometimes) free coffee! My story, by Rainman

I went out with a woman that worked at Coffee People. It was great. She was fun and sexy, big and beautiful, warm and open minded. She understood the real truths about life, and that's good because my own life has been a wreckless adventure. We were like little magnets, quite different, but powerfully attracted to each other. We talked about all that kind of stuff a lot, and it brought us closer. Of course, we drank lots of coffee the whole time. Originally, I was more of a Starbuck's man, but she soon reformed me.

Soon, I was in with the Coffee People; a whole different attitude. Virtually all the members of the staff were in rock bands, and we would go see them.

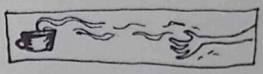
Everything was rosy (or Black Tigery). But my girly girl was working herself to death, kind of, and it made it hard for us to see each other (although even just sleeping together overnight was plenty wonderful). Besides the management at her store changed, and well, things just were never the same.

She quit, as I thought she should (so many factors suggested it), but we broke up soon after and she now resented me. We didn't fight much until after we broke up. Then she'd have (caffeine fueled?) rants directed at me that blew my mind with their anger. Of course, I still loved her, but I was convinced things must end. In a state of bewilderment, I held the line.

Soon enough, we were friends again. Although the great sex (and free coffee!) was no more.

Everytime I go to Coffee People, I think of her.

And the damn things are everywhere! ;-)



I worked at a cafe in Boulder, Colorado. A street man came in with all of his belongings on his big pack on his back. I was trying to be nice to him because I was sure he had a hard time making friends. He was tall and skinny, dirty and smelly, always wore his sunglasses no matter the time of day. He always wore his walkman and headphones turned up really loud, even ordering from the counter really quietly with his radio up loud. He never smiled, and he always ordered a big tall glass full of black coffee, and spent at least five minutes at the condiment bar to tailor it with cinnamon. Anyway, that day he decided to be nice to me in return. I said, "Here's your coffee!" cheerfully, and I continued "Isn't that a pretty flower?" pointing at the snapdragon attached to the tip-jar. He squeezed one of the blossoms, looked straight at me and said "Looks like a vagina."

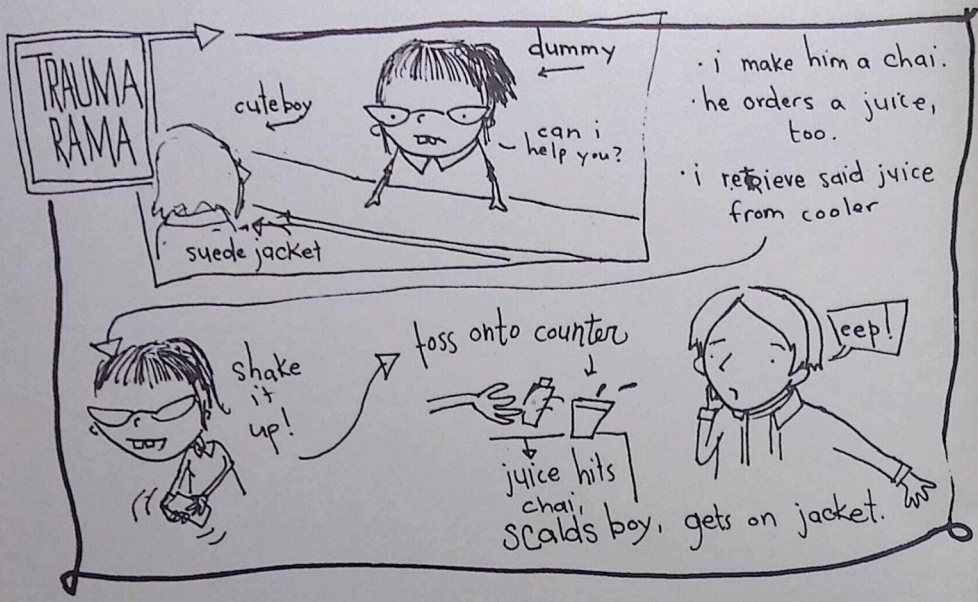
The names have been left blank to protect the innocent and the guilty.

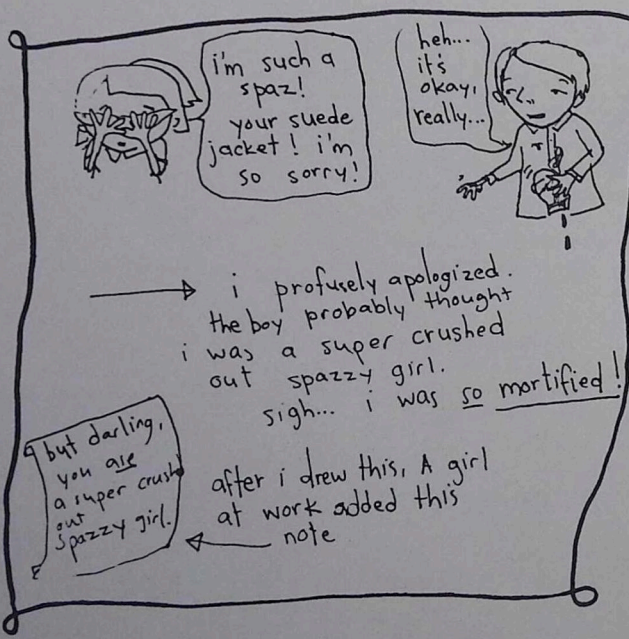
So it's my birthday. I am once again at the coffee shop on the 21st. Not the one your thinking, I'm talking about the other coffee house. There are about three girls who work there that I have a crushes on. The only one who seems to acknowledge I exist is M____. It's cool. I play it chill. She bothered to ask me my name and when she went away for a year, when she came back she remember what I drank (iced double americano) when she started working there again.

Not that I had a chance in hell with this gal, but my good buddy S____ fucked it all up. He decided to tell her that he loved her. The second fucking time he met her. This was after I had told S___ that this gal was jamming on my shit. All my careful subtleness had been blown. Now when I go there all she does is ask about stoopid head S____. Not that I would tell him. I told him she thought he was a psycho. He doesn't come to that coffee shop any more. But he has blown any chance I had with her. Not that were was any.

— dan, age 26

p.s. Future zine you could do: Grocery Store Crushes, Bank Tellers, Record Store Clerks.


TRAUMA RAMA
dummy
cuteboy
can i help you?
suede jacket
· i make him a chai.
· he orders a juice, too.
· i retrieve said juice from cooler
shake it up!
toss onto counter
juice hits chai, scalds boy, gets on jacket.
eep!


i'm such a spaz! your suede jacket! i'm so sorry!
heh... it's okay, really...
i profusely apologized. the boy probably thought i was a super crushed out spazzy girl. sigh... i was so mortified!
but darling, you are a super crushed out spazzy girl.
after i drew this, A girl at work added this note

Gourmandies java

I worked for two years at a crappy coffee shop in Utah that just about gave away more than it sold. It had horrible decor of aqua and pink with neon lights running the walls and over the glass storefront windows that looked out to the parking lot of the strip mall. We were located next to the second run movie house, no wonder we never had any customers.

Over time I acquired the inevitable group of people with silly crushes on me for the mere fact that I controlled their caffeine consumption and/or that I looked cuter behind a counter. Here are some of the presents I acquired besides phone numbers in the tip jar:

- Stolen art pens—from an adoring fifteen year old strip mall rat who wanted me to buy him alcohol and get drunk with him.
- A book of stamps—from a 28 year old hockey playing ex-bay area graphics designers who moved to Utah in his midlife crisis to snowboard and work at home depot. He tried to impress me with his late 80's fanzines, pictures he had taken of Crimpshrine, and his amazingly competitive scrabble abilities.
- A long arm stapler-from a seventeen year old co-worker who was enthralled by zines...and me. Cody was shy, anti-social, and liked fugazi a lot. He listened to me rant and cry during a nasty break up. A few weeks after the stapler gift, he told me he was in love with me but that he was keeping his heart in his pocket, I should have seen that coming.

I have also had crushes say strange things to me:

- From a boyfriend: "two of my dreams have come true, I am in a band that i love and i have a girlfriend that works at a coffee shop'. I think he was just in love with the idea of free coffee.
- Some random guy: "you're so cute, therefore, we should go dancing". Me, being the smartass philosophy major wanted to say that it doesn't logically follow that since he thought I was cute that we should therefore go dancing. I didn't I just told him that I don't dance and that I don't think my boyfriend would like that very much, even though I didn't have a boyfriend.
- "Cassi and I knew you were too cool to be straight" from the two queer girls that worked at the theater next door after I had kissed one of them.

And other strange experiences involving crush type activities:

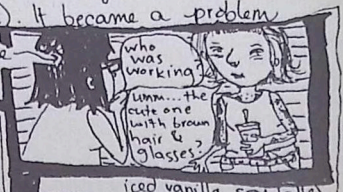
- A barrage of stale bagels thrown at me from a passing car as i was standing on the sidewalk after closing. I thought it was just a disgruntled bagel baker but it turned out to be a secret admirer.
- An ex-boyfriend who waited in his car by the Dumpster to watch me take the trash out just to see if i was still working there.
- Jeremy was on parole for a drug charge. He had one of those ankle monitor things and worked at a restaurant in the strip mall. He used to come in and hang out and play card game with me, show me is jailhouse tattoos, and flirt by saying things like "man, why is it that only the underage girls like me when they realize i'm a criminal. Why can't girls your age like me?"

I guess that's all my weird crush stories from my crappy coffee shop. Sometimes lists are boring but i couldn't think of anything more creative for this, sorry. I am Alex Wrekk and I write a zine called brain-scan. You can e-mail me at: alex@smallworldbuttons.com or real mail at: 809 n shaver st. Portland, Oregon 97227

one — my first coffeeshop crush story

by Nicole G.

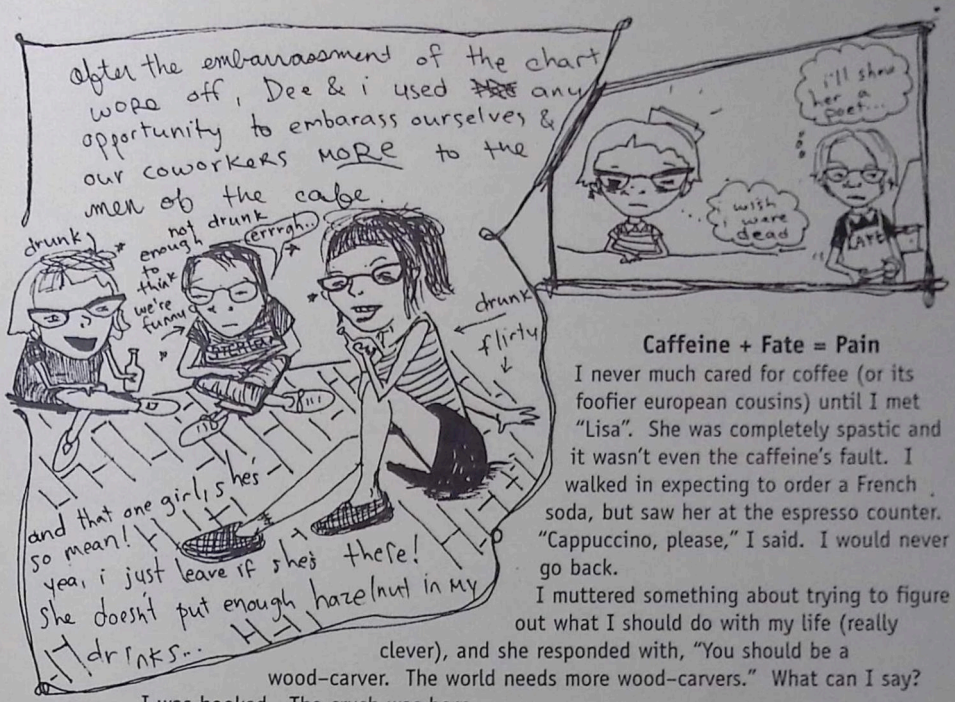
in kansas city i worked in a used clothing store, only 2 blocks away from a cafe/roasterie (home to many cute baristas with brown hair & glasses). it became a problem to tell one from another at our store. so we made up our own nicknames for them...



eventually a chart was made. each barista had their own character & characteristics, & name on a sheet of paper. I drew it, but in my defense i'd like to add that the nicknames "cutie" and "super cutie" had NOTHING to do with me! rather, i had nothing to do with them. the list went on at least 4 more people, including the girls: Mean, Kinda mean, Butch, & the Baker. A list for just us.

the Poet: announces each drink. Looks thoughtful → always dressed up!
the Pervert: looks sinister always. Has a Playboy mug. Squid tattoo.
the Cutie → nice legs! can be cocky. Never gives out free drinks.
the Super-CUTIE manager... Lots of tattoos friendly. married...

as inevitably happens to things of this nature, my chart got passed to the enemy when Dee from my work, was courting the Pervert! A sinister fellow indeed. We were shocked & horrified to hear that he's showed it to all his co workers!...!... The girls were mad at me for drawing it, Dee for letting it into the wrong hands, and mostly the Pervert, because we couldn't go in there for MONTHS, and even then had to wonder at every barista's sideways glance or chuckle... (we drank lemonade for a while).


After the embarrassment of the chart wore off, Dee & I used ~~any~~ any opportunity to embarass ourselves & our coworkers MORE to the men of the cafe.
drunk
not drunk enough to think we're funny
errrgh..
drunk
flirty
and that one girl, she's so mean! yea, i just leave if she's there! She doesn't put enough hazelnut in my drinks..
i'll show her a feet...
wish i were dead
LATE

Caffeine + Fate = Pain

I never much cared for coffee (or its foofier european cousins) until I met "Lisa". She was completely spastic and it wasn't even the caffeine's fault. I walked in expecting to order a French soda, but saw her at the espresso counter. "Cappuccino, please," I said. I would never go back.

I muttered something about trying to figure out what I should do with my life (really clever), and she responded with, "You should be a wood-carver. The world needs more wood-carvers." What can I say? I was hooked. The crush was born.

Through the standard coffeeshop crush stalking tactics, I learned she had a boyfriend — for five years, no less. And it got worse, he was in a band that I actually liked. How hopeless can you get?

It goes without saying that I kept frequenting the café, acquiring a more deeper, brooding crush, and a caffeine addiction, to boot. It was painful. She would give me free drinks, extra whipped cream, witty small talk. She really twisted the knife.

Then, a break — I heard she broke up with her boyfriend! It was my chance to sweep her off her feet, like so many other crushes from my past. (Not.) I escalated my stalkings... er, coffee consumption. We chatted, she smiled, I swooned. Then, a set-back: she confided in me she no longer had interest in men. Ouch. She had designs on some girl who wore a lot of plaid or something. "Lucky girl!" I chirped, all the while picturing brutal death scenarios for the plaid girl.

Fate can be downright mean. "Lisa" moved into a house across the street from me about two weeks later. Stupidly, I hung out at her house often, and we left notes on each others' doors. I could feel the knife twisting, spinning.

Then, fate got just plain nasty. I wish I was making this up. I glanced out my window one day, into the house next door (the one directly across from where "Lisa" lived) and saw "Lisa". Kissing the plaid girl. Who lived next door to me. I kid you not. I walked away from the window in shock. I didn't even like coffee.

And you thought there were no porn sites on the internet for you...

Reviews of the two hottest coffee sites on the web by the cleverly named: Henrietta Elbowstein

My boyfriend has stopped joining me for coffee in the morning. He likens the experience of me keeping watch over his shoulder at bespectacled coffee boys to that of him dragging me to a strip club only to witness lapdance after lapdance and him chatting up all of the dancers, trying to get them to accompany him home. I'll admit, I have a slight infatuation with coffee shop boys. It turned an otherwise normal afternoon at the library ugly the other day when my obsession traversed into the arena of the world wide web. Boyfriend looked over at what i was doing and clicked his tongue in dissaproval. "I can't believe you" is what i remember him saying as he grabbed his coat and retreated from my side to the nether regions of the gardening section. My version of internet porn obsession is staring hours on end at photos of young scruffy boys (with thick prescription lenses) hard at work over a coffee roaster, or behind a counter serving espresso drinks and looking apathetic. Sigh, oh the love of the barista.

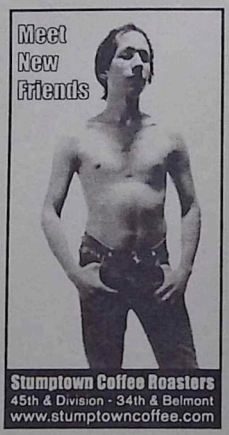
Behold, THE TWO HOTTEST COFFEE SITES ON THE WEB.

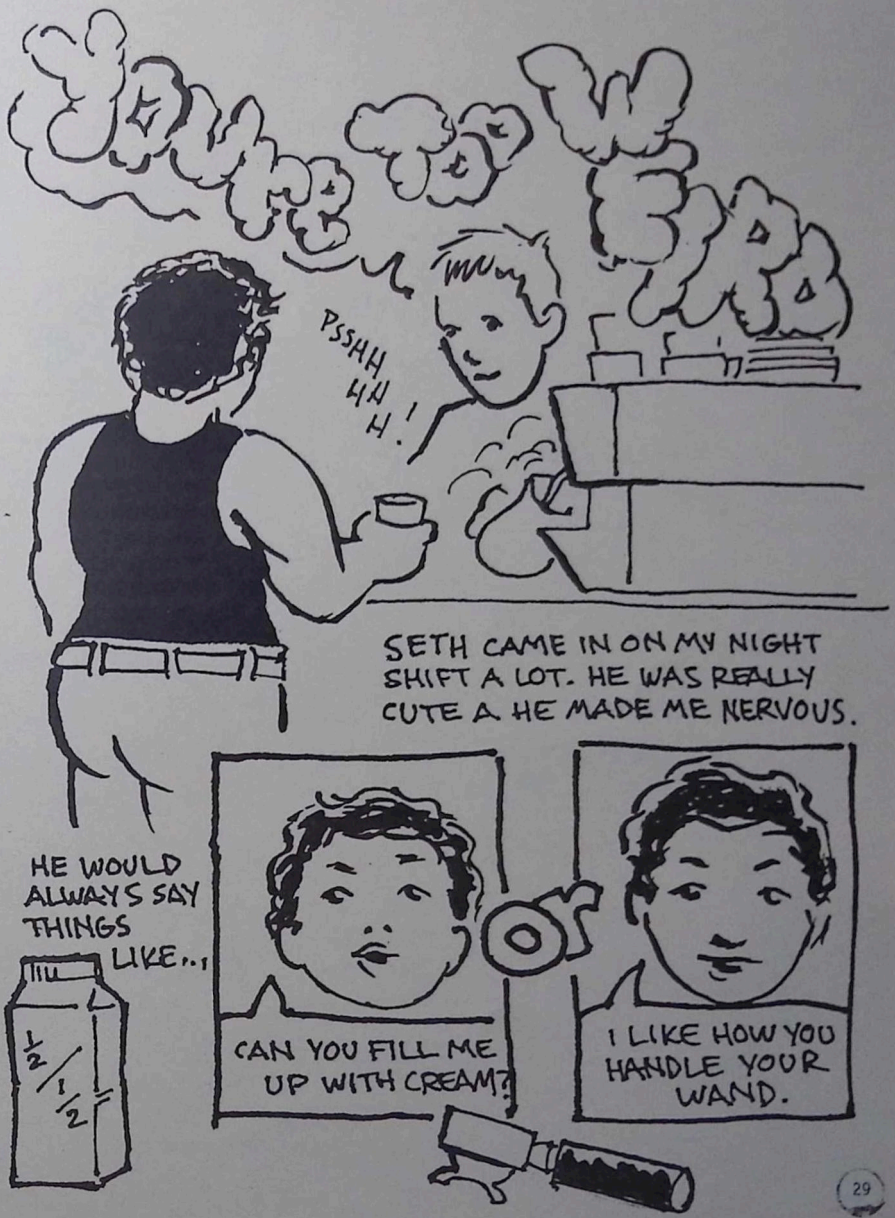
1. BROADWAY CAFÉ — Kansas City, MO
www.broadwaycafeandroasterie.com

Broadway Café has a very complete website photo-wise, with tantalizing barista snapshots and interviews, photos of the baker and even several photos featuring the co-owner and roaster, perched on top of stools in front of their roaster, wearing horn rimmed glasses, collared shirts and looking coy. I have to add that one of the baristas featured was in love with me at one point in time. Score one for Henrietta. See, it's not all so one sided after all. There are step by step pictures of espresso shots being pulled, information on free trade coffee and the basic mumbo jumbo. The baristas here are tough, which might be a little bit extra for you to think about when navigating. They keep a baseball bat behind the counter and have even before lept over said counter and tackled a potential tip stealer.

2. STUMPTOWN COFFEE — Portland, OR
www.stumptowncoffee.com

This site kills me! I sit enthralled and staring at picture after picture of dreamy boys and girls roasting and serving coffee, not to mention giving me a glimpse into their lives with lists of employee's favorite things and customers. Sigh. You can really spend some time here browsing past advertisements (including one photo no other coffeeshop site has been able to offer – an actual barista with no shirt on!), reading the lists as I said, and scanning through the "photo album" and choosing your own favorite Stumptown personality. I can't even begin to imagine how many crushes and fantasies are fed just by keeping tabs on the stumptown website. Phew. A must see for anyone interested in who's serving their coffee.

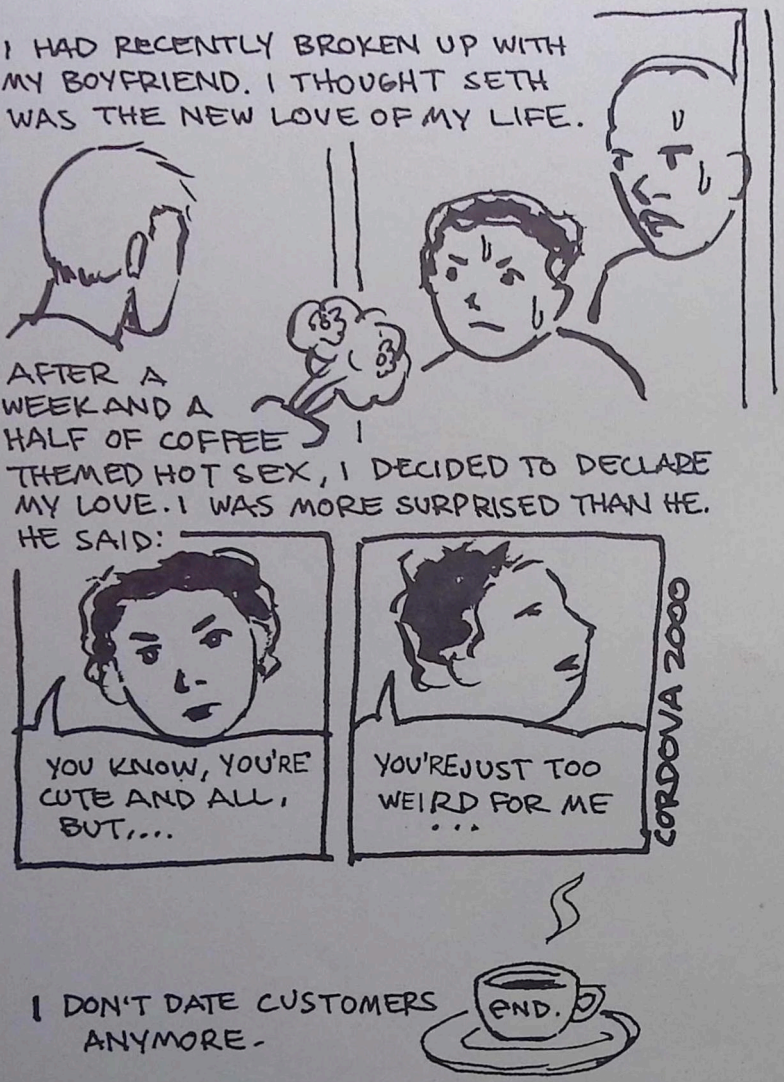



PSSHH 4H H!
SETH CAME IN ON MY NIGHT SHIFT A LOT. HE WAS REALLY CUTE & HE MADE ME NERVOUS.
HE WOULD ALWAYS SAY THINGS LIKE..
1/2 1/2
CAN YOU FILL ME UP WITH CREAM?
I LIKE HOW YOU HANDLE YOUR WAND.

I WOULD SEE HIM SITTING WITH ALL THE "HIP" CUSTOMERS. THEY WERE USUALLY LOUD AND PRE-TENSIOUS.
HA! HA! HA!
I FIGURED HE WAS INACCESSIBLE.

ONE NIGHT WHILE HE WAS FLIRTING WITH ME I SAID:
I-uh-I LIKE YOU... uh... YOU'RE CUTE ...Mmm...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE SAW IN ME, BUT THAT NIGHT AFTER CLOSING, HE GULPED ME DOWN IN THE STORE ROOM.
MM... SHLORP! MM..
WHENEVER WE FUCKED, HE WOULD USE
COFFEE ANALOGIES
TO TALK DIRTY TO ME.
HE PREFEERED A COFFEE ENEMA BEFORE INTERC COURSE.


I HAD RECENTLY BROKEN UP WITH MY BOYFRIEND. I THOUGHT SETH WAS THE NEW LOVE OF MY LIFE.
AFTER A WEEK AND A HALF OF COFFEE THEMED HOT SEX, I DECIDED TO DECLARE MY LOVE. I WAS MORE SURPRISED THAN HE. HE SAID:
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE CUTE AND ALL, BUT,...
YOU'RE JUST TOO WEIRD FOR ME ...
CORDOVA 2000
I DON'T DATE CUSTOMERS ANYMORE.
END.

Extra Extra!!! Three bonus crushes exclusively for this printing!

Back in 1997 I was stuck in a desperate rut. My partner of 3 years and I had split up after a few long, bitter fights. I was really getting really sick of my job and was looking for an out but had no prospects. The nail in the coffin was when my house burned down.

I was playing in a band with a few friends and we would occasionally hang out at this coffee shop even though half of us didn't even drink coffee. One day a girl who worked there seemed to have a few common interests with me. We made plans to innocently hang out because we were "bored".

We ended up going to see some shitty movie. Somewhere along the line it started feeling like a date. At the end of the night she said something along the lines of "I'm really glad things worked out this way". I should have known these were all calculated moves. You can't blame me. I was rebounding and needed any distraction I could get at the moment.

We started hanging out more often and she would give me banana chocolate milk from her work. It turns out she knew a lot about me and was familiar with my zines. It also turned out that she was rebounding from a relationship with a boy who was not interesting enough for her to talk to.

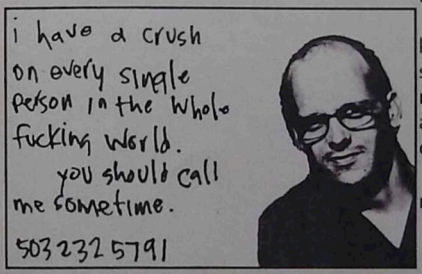
We talked for long hours about politics and current events. She liked to escalate the debates and hold her own opinions but if someone had more information than her she would always play it off like they were arguing the same angle.

At night she closed the coffee shop by herself and the owners would trust her so much that they wouldn't even show their faces after 6 or 7 PM. Somewhere along the line we got the idea that we could have sex in the back room after the coffee shop closed. This was really exhilarating at first and the risk of getting caught made it really exciting somehow. Once, we saw headlights coming through the front window and we panicked but it was just some customer coming back to get something they left in the parking lot. This practice went on for months until it came to light that she was a compulsive liar who hadn't been upfront about much of anything; including sexual history, where she grew up, or even her age!

She would fabricate stories about being in the middle of gang wars, seeing people die, and how she had grown up on the streets of New York and was going to go back some day. At the time I wanted to be sympathetic and believe that all the stories were true. In the back of my mind I was doubting her but it wasn't until my friends started asking questions about her suspicious history that I had really had to come to terms with it.

It also came to light around this time that we rarely had serious conversations about ourselves; if ever. She was interested in talking about politics or what was in the newspaper but not about her life or our relationship.

I had a long talk with her one night on the back stoop of the coffee shop. I told her that I couldn't handle her stories anymore. She got upset and figured out what was coming. I tried to explain my side of the story to her. She screamed and cried before I even delivered the clinching statements. She spelled it out for me before I had a chance to. We were finished and she said if I wouldn't date her we couldn't be friends either. She also took the liberty of telling all of her friends terrible things about me. I never got the gory details but I do know that they wouldn't talk to me – let alone look at me!



I was an emotional wreck for the next few months. I didn't know if my actions were justified or righteous. I didn't know if I should have cut things off sooner. I took long bike rides in the middle of the night because I had nothing going on otherwise. It allowed me to think when there were no cars out. I had a few critical moments but my friends were there for me.

Now she is in the military and I live far, far away. She still makes zines and sends them to people I know.

- ex poindexter

Thru friends, I knew this girl liked me..
>GRUNT<
SHOE
So, with undeserved courage, I asked her on a date..
HE'S KINDA CUTE.. I GUESS..
Her friends talked about me like a piece of meat...
We spent one awkward night together..
UMM..
EWW..
>SNORE!<
SHOE
Her room smelled like cooped-up dog with a hint of turtle..
I snuck out early and started going to a different coffeeshop.
Beaty '04

Wake Up and Smell the Barista by Kate Lopresti

A sophomore in college, I was unable to strike up a conversation on my own with any guy unless there was a transaction to talk about. As a result, I went gaga over various bookstore clerks, video store workers, pizza delivery guys, and dopes in hairnets who worked in campus cafeterias. The only common traits these men shared, aside from working a cash register, was that they were usually tall and weighed a lot less than I did. Someone to look up to, but who I could easily take down should the 'relationship' ever turn to blows.

The barista at Espresso Royale was a skinny young man who had the beginnings of a receding hairline and wore thick glasses with chunky black frames. He had a collection of Western-style shirts with snaps for buttons, which he wore untucked over his tight, dirty gray, blue jeans. Eventually I would learn that I could roll a bowling ball down any aisle in my local record store and knock over at least two guys who looked just like this one, but at the time he seemed different enough that he was worthy of my affection, not to mention a dollar tip on my already expensive chocolate _mocha flavored with raspberry syrup and topped with whipped cream. That drink embarrasses me now. And so does the fact I was repeatedly susceptible to the customer service trap of falling for someone whose job was based in extending kindness and help to strangers.

Later in the school year, he stopped working at the coffee shop. Maybe he got a desk job or moved. It was also possible that he quit the job simply because the clientele freaked him out. After a short mourning period during which I drank coffee and looked forlornly out the window at happy couples who walked the street hand-in-hand, I then decided to aim my affections towards my classmates. It was time to move on from idle chitchat at a cash register to saying hello to the woefully thin, but tall, boys I tried to sit next to in lecture (this, too, went nowhere).

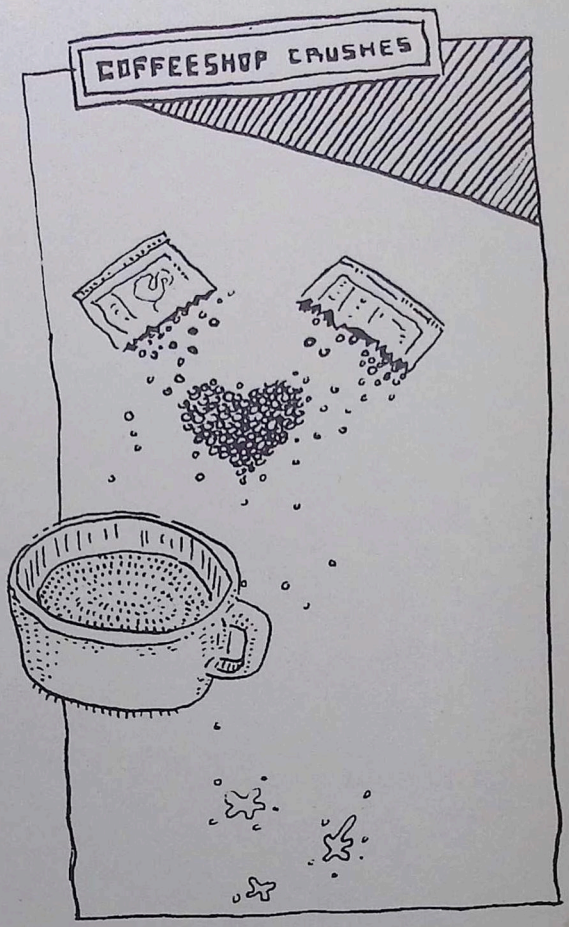
Years later I found myself on the other side of the counter when I worked in a bookstore. One morning, I started my day at the store's café to get a cup of coffee and found my old Espresso Royale crush working the espresso machine. Once a stranger, now he was a co-worker. My mind flooded with memories of day dreams of wanting to date him. Nervously, I asked for my drink and introduced myself. Then, over time, the unimaginable happened: I got to know him. I learned his name (Steve), found out where he lived (East Johnson Street), and surprised myself by remaining calm and cheerful when he introduced me to his girlfriend (a dark eyed, non-smiling Nico-type). And when he and his girlfriend threw a party, he invited me. This was progress, sort of.

I showed up to the party with a bottle of cheap wine and immediately looked for fellow co-workers. As is any guest's habit, we walked around his home and swallowed whole the details of his apartment, curious about the life he had outside of work. Second-hand couches lined the walls of the living room, where no one sat. A lone table with no chairs stood in the kitchen, where everyone grouped. Horse knick-knacks, one of which would lose a leg before the end of the evening, stood on top of the television . In the bathroom my friend Jim peeked into the medicine cabinet and uncovered a bottle of Crystal Stick Body Deodorant. Soon a rumor circulated the party that our manager had a pointed discussion with Steve about personal hygiene and its place in the coffee shop. Evidentially, our friend's body odor offended other baristas and he had to do something about it. Crystal Stick was his answer.

From a corner in the kitchen I drank and watched Steve make the party rounds. This was my crush: a grown man who had been reminded to bathe. The next morning's tableau unfolded before me: Steve rises late for work, wearing only his boxers from the day before, Nico sleeping next to him in an oversized T-shirt. He picks up his jeans from the floor and steps into them before he stumbles down the hallway to the bathroom. Maybe he yawns and rubs his eyes while his roommate finishes a shower. He then goes into the bathroom, empties his bladder full of the previous night's last bottle of wine, probably mine, and turns to leave without washing his hands or face. Stepping through the doorway he remembers the personal hygiene mandate. He turns around, opens the medicine cabinet, and pulls out his magic crystal, wet with condensation from teh recent shower - not his - and applies to each armpit. Then he returns to his room to dress.

From that day forward, I was cured of my lingering crush on Steve and no longer upset that he had Nico. What's more, I was also cured of my morning coffee habit, for a short time anyway.

Cover illustrations by **Ed Stasny**



"I wanted something. I didn't get it. I was embarrassed."

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